

Gentiles and the Remnant of Israel

📖 Romans 9:24-29

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Q: Didn't God still harden Pharaoh? So God chooses who He will harden and who He will show mercy to.

A: This is referring back to Rom 9:14-18 and especially verse 18. It's a good question. I didn't want to go into this and maybe I should have. I put a short explanation of it in an endnote in the last lesson. The text may seem to indicate that God arbitrarily hardens whom He hardens and that humans can do nothing about it when we read it out of context. Rom 9:17-18 seems really strong. "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." A quote from where? Exod 9:16. Verse 18 then concludes, "So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires." What I'm trying to say is that this is not arbitrary. If He showed mercy to Moses it was because Moses was malleable, he was responsive to God's work in his life. If He hardened Pharaoh it was because Pharaoh was not malleable, he was resistant to God's work in his life. So God's showing mercy and hardening were not arbitrary. If you actually study out the hardening process of Pharaoh's heart you find several things. First, Pharaoh's heart was already in a hardened condition. God said in Exod 3:19 to Moses, "I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go, except under a heavy hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My miracles which I shall do in the midst of it; and after that he will let you go." In Exod 7:13 it is said in the qal stem that "Pharaoh's heart was hard" using a word *chazak* which means "strong or firm." In Exod 7:14 it is said in the qal stem that "Pharaoh's heart is stubborn" using a word *kabedh* which means "heavy." The same notice using *chazak* is used again in 7:22 where it says "Pharaoh's heart was strong," meaning in a strong state of resistance to God. And then again in 8:19 and 9:7, all qal stems, all pointing to the fact that Pharaoh's heart was already resistant to letting the people go. This is all before God is ever said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart. In other words, God did not put this resistance in Pharaoh's heart. We are to know that Pharaoh's heart was already resistant. Second, Pharaoh hardened his heart before God ever hardened his heart. In Exod 8:15 it uses the hiphil stem of *kabedh* to say that "Pharaoh...made heavy his heart." He did the same thing in Exod 8:32 in the hiphil stem again where it says "Pharaoh made heavy his heart this time also..." This is all before it is ever said that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. In other words, God did not make Pharaoh's heart heavy in these passages. Pharaoh made his own heart heavy. We are to know then that Pharaoh's heart was in a

state of resistance and that this state of resistance grew heavier throughout the plague sequence. Third, God pronounced that He would harden Pharaoh's already hard heart while Moses was still in Egypt. God said to Moses in Exod 4:21, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go." When coupled with Exod 3:19 we understand that the predictions are stating that Pharaoh would not let the people go until all ten plagues had run their course. For Pharaoh to resist until that point would require that God strengthen Pharaoh's resolve toward the end of the plague sequence. That is what God does for the first time in Exod 9:16 where it uses the Hebrew word *chazak* to show that God strengthened Pharaoh's resistance to let the people go. It was only after Pharaoh's heart was already resistant and had grown increasingly resistant that God strengthened Pharaoh's resolve in order to make His power and name known throughout the whole earth. So God's hardening was not arbitrary. God did not choose Pharaoh to resist Him. God chose to strengthen Pharaoh's already firmly entrenched resistance in order to further His strategy to make His name known throughout the whole world. Fourth, multiple times Pharaoh was prompted to let the people go by men in his own administration and he still refused. On one occasion Moses and Aaron brought forth gnats on all the land of Egypt. Pharaoh's magicians then tried to bring forth gnats but they could not. Then they said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God!" Even the magicians of Egypt could see that this was the work of God and yet Pharaoh rejected it. On another occasion men in his administration said to him, "Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?" At that point Egypt was a desolation. The greatest superpower on earth had gone from a state of splendor to a state of destruction in a matter of only a few months. And yet Pharaoh still refused to let the people go. It is clear from the narrative that God did not harden Pharaoh arbitrarily but Pharaoh already had a resistant heart before the plagues, grew increasingly resistant through the plagues and had encouragement from his men on staff to let the people go all before God strengthened his resolve to refuse to let the people go. God was fully justified in strengthening his resolve at that point in order to make His power and name known through the whole earth.

Last time we looked further at Romans 9:19-24. In 9:19 we see a general objection to the concept that God has the right to show mercy or harden. "You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" Paul answers in 9:20 with a stinging rebuke that alludes to the OT. "O man, on the contrary, who are you who contends with God?" Man is not in a position to question God's dealings. Although His dealings, as we have seen, are not arbitrary but calculated. He then draws from the OT imagery of the potter and the clay. "The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? In the OT contexts of Jer 18 and Isa 45 God is the molder and the nation Israel is the thing molded. Israel is always the lump of clay. In 9:21 he asks, "Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?" God as the potter had every right over the nation Israel to make one portion for honorable use because that portion was malleable, it was workable, it responded positively to the Messiahship of Jesus. And equally God had the right over the nation Israel to make from that same nation one portion for

common use because that portion was not malleable, it was not workable, it rejected the Messiahship of Jesus. The two portions are the remnant and the non-remnant. In 9:22 Paul speaks of the non-remnant. "What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known." God had every right to do that. They had resisted His will. And yet instead it says, He "endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction." The middle voice of "prepared" means they "prepared themselves for destruction. The perfect tense means they prepared themselves at a past point in time with ongoing effects. The event that prepared them for destruction was the national rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus. Because of that they had no claim on God's protection. God could justifiably unleash His fury and obliterate them. But He didn't. In 9:23 Paul speaks of why He didn't. It relates to the remnant "And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory." The verb "prepared" here is the active voice. God is the one who prepared them or outfitted them beforehand for glory, meaning at the moment of their reception of the Messiahship of Jesus. At that moment God outfitted them for future glory in the covenanted kingdom. In 9:24 Paul mentions another group that God outfitted for future glory in the covenanted kingdom. "even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." As strange as it may appear to a Jew, God had called some from "among Gentiles" to be partakers of future glory in the kingdom. In the Gospels we mentioned the Canaanite woman last week. There are others in the Gospels such as the Samaritan woman at the well and Gentile centurions. We meet many more in the Book of Acts, from among both Samaritans and Gentiles. It became apparent over time that He is presently calling both Jews and Gentiles together into the one body of Messiah, the Church.

Today we continue with this theme of God calling Gentiles in 9:25 and 26. **As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.' "** Here Paul quotes from the OT again. Hold your place here and turn to Hosea. It's after Daniel. You will find as we study the NT that we are constantly going back to the OT. There is simply no way we can understand the NT if we don't understand the OT. Therefore, if we are going to be NT Christians we have to be OT students. This quote comes from one of the strangest books of the OT, Hosea. God told Hosea, in chapter 1, "Go marry a prostitute!" So he went and married a prostitute named Gomer and with a name like that you may be destined for that vocation. That commandment, as you can imagine, causes many OT scholars to squirm. So you can only imagine the ways they try to skirt around it. How in the world can God command a godly man like Hosea to "Go marry a prostitute!" Well, if you understand that was what God was married to you can see perfectly well why God commanded him to do that. God was married to the prostitute Israel, the ten northern tribes, and so Hosea was to marry a prostitute to illustrate to the ten tribes of Israel what God had to be married to. The ten tribes had become a prostitute. She had prostituted herself out to many other nations and their gods. She had not remained true to God, her one true husband, but God would remain faithful to her. It's one of the most interesting books in the Bible. On one hand you see God really angry at Israel and on the other you see God loves Israel. And you wonder, "What is going on with God here?" Does He love them or not? It brings out the personality of God in a way that

no other book of the Bible does and you come to see that God is not a cold statue in heaven but a person who reacts and interacts with us in ways that are often quite surprising. In Romans, Paul loosely quotes Hosea 2:23. In Hosea 2:23 God says, "I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'" Now you don't really understand this verse out of context. The context is the restoration of the ten tribes of Israel. In verse 14 you can see God is married to this prostitute nation and they are out prostituting themselves to other gods, living in idolatry, and yet God is faithful, He will not divorce Her. He says, "Therefore, behold, I will allure her," and men, by the way, there are some tips here for how to woo your wife so you might want to write this passage down and be a real man and do some study. God is wooing His wife to Himself. "behold, I will allure her, Bring her into the wilderness And speak kindly to her." What's He doing? She's been prostituting herself out to every customer and God says, "I'm going to win her to Me." So He takes her away. Then what does He do? Verse 15, gives her gifts, "Then I will give her vineyards from there, And the valley of Achor as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt." Remember that great song after they passed through the Red Sea? Verse 16, "It will come about in that day," declares the LORD, "That you will call Me Ishi And will no longer call Me Baali." What is this? "Ishi" means 'husband' and "Baali" means 'master.' As long as she had been out prostituting herself out to other gods she referred to her one true God as 'master,' a negative term of ownership and possession, but when He wins her back she will refer to Him as 'husband,' a positive term of distinction and honor. Israel has a totally different attitude toward God in verse 16. Verse 17, "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, So that they will be mentioned by their names no more. In that day I will also make a covenant for them..." What covenant? This is the new covenant. And look what blessing the fulfillment of the new covenant brings; "With the beasts of the field, The birds of the sky, And the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land, And will make them lie down in safety." In other words, it's a reversal of the curse and nature's enmity with man and man's enmity with man. It will be a time of peace. Verse 19, "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion,²⁰ And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD." That's what the new covenant will bring for that prostitute nation. Verse 21, "It will come about in that day that I will respond," declares the LORD. "I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,²² And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil, And they will respond to Jezreel." The most fertile valley in the northern kingdom, it's going to bear fruit for them. Verse 23, "I will sow her for Myself in the land." God's going to sow her in the Promised Land so that she will never again be uprooted. The descriptions all refer to future life in the millennial kingdom, God's going to restore the ten tribes. Then the next part is the part that Paul quotes in Rom 9:25 with reference to Gentiles, "I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!'" which refers to the ten tribes but Paul applies to Gentiles because of one point of similarity. Now this is an interesting and very difficult text to understand, especially from the English. The Hebrew for "compassion" is *ruhamah* and the Hebrew for "My people" is *ammi*. If

you want to negate something in Hebrew you attach *lo*. Now watch close because this isn't easy material and Paul is extremely well-versed in the Hebrew OT. *Ruhamah*, "compassion," *lo-ruhamah*, "no compassion. *Ammi*, "My people," *lo ammi*, "not My people." Now look back to Hos 1. In Hosea 1 Hosea has three children with Gomer. The first is verse 4, they named him Jezreel. Jezreel was a valley. It's a weird name but it was a place where a lot of blood was shed. It's the same valley known as Armageddon. It's a place of war and bloodshed and the first son represented what was going to happen to the ten northern tribes of Israel for their prostitution, they were going to have their blood shed by the Assyrians. The second kid is verse 6, this was a girl and they named her "Lo-ruhamah." Oh, you recognize that, don't you? It means "no compassion." Sort of a weird name too. How would you like to be named, "without compassion?" The name of this second child represented that God was withdrawing His compassion from the ten tribes of Israel because of all her prostitutions. The third child is verse 8 and 9 and this was a son, they named him "Lo-ammi." Oh, you recognize that too, don't you? It means "not My people." Another weird name. The name of this third child represented that the ten tribes were no longer going to be God's people because of all their prostitutions. The way all this played out was in 721 BC the Assyrians came in and defeated the ten tribes, God did not show them compassion and they were not His people, they were estranged from God. So the three kids represent what was going to happen to the northern kingdom from 721BC onward! But what did we see earlier in Hosea 2:14-23 and especially verse 23? God's not done with the ten tribes of Israel. After a long time God is going to win her back to Himself and she who was *lo ruhamah*, without compassion, will be shown *ruhamah*, compassion; and she who was *lo ammi*, not My people, will be *ammi*, My people. So the entire thing is speaking of the ten tribes of Israel. Why then does Paul quote it in Romans 9:25? He's making an application of Hos 2:23 to Gentiles. Why? Because there is one point of similarity between the ten tribes and Gentiles. What's the point of similarity? As the ten tribes were not His people and were not shown compassion in exile so Gentiles were not His people and were not shown compassion. But just as they will be His people in the future so now we are his people and have obtained compassion! I hope you sense the power of this point that took quite a bit of time to develop, but is worth it to realize the tremendous mercy and compassion God is now showing us, which was not shown our ancestors.

Now stay here in Hosea because in Romans 9:26 Paul quotes again from Hosea, this time he says, **AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD.**" It's a quote from Hos 1:10. This time it's easy to see what Paul is doing. He's doing the exact same thing he did in 9:25. He is taking the northern kingdom and saying that even though for a time you are not going to be my people and you are not going to be shown compassion, ultimately I am going to restore you and he's applying that to Gentiles in this present age. We know this original passage in Hosea refers to Israel because he says in 1:10, "Yet the number of the sons of Israel Will be like the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered; And in the place Where it is said to them, "You are not My people," It will be said to them, "You are the sons of the living God."

So “in the place,” note that, in the very same place that God abandoned them, which was the northern kingdom, in that same land, they will be called “sons of the living God.” But Paul picks that up and applies it to Gentiles because again, there is one point of similarity. He’s trying to explain what is going on with all this Gentile salvation in the present age and his explanation is that in the same way that the ten northern tribes went through a period when they were not God’s people and were estranged from Him so also Gentiles were in a period like that but now they are His people and now they are called sons of the living God! This is a tremendous and powerful use of the OT by the apostle Paul. God is now working with Gentile nations and calling out Gentiles to be His people and to be sons of the living God and if you are a Gentile believer here today, you are one of them. How can this be? Do you realize the magnitude of the mercy that has been shown to you? Our forefathers in the ancient past, during OT times, were not shown mercy as we have been. We hold a tremendous position.

Now in 9:27 Paul returns to the remnant of Israel. That was just a short excursus on Gentiles. He will not return to Gentiles until Romans 11:11. So he’s going to pick this line of argument back up later on. But in 9:27 it’s back to the remnant of Israel. **Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BE LIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; ²⁸FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.” ²⁹And just as Isaiah foretold, “UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH.”** We read all that for context. Three quotes and where do they come from? All from Isaiah, two from Isa 10:22-23 and one from Isa 1:9. So we’re back to the OT again. And clearly, as we said before, he’s dealing with the remnant of Israel. Let’s hold our place here and turn to Isa 10. What we want to do is find out what kind of salvation Paul is talking about because he said in verse 27, **IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED.** What do you mean by **SAVED** Paul? People think it’s obvious. They go to heaven. Nonsense. If anything is not obvious it is that they get to go to heaven. If you read the original context it is actually very obvious what they are being saved from. In Isa 10:20 we read, “Now in that day...” in what day? In the day that the previous context is announcing. So if we back up to verse 5 we see the day when the Assyrian king comes to destroy the northern kingdom of Israel. That was 721BC. Same context as Hosea 1-2 that we saw earlier. These were connected in Paul’s mind. Then in verse 11 he says, “Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?” Of course He will. Jerusalem was the capital of the southern kingdom of Judah. Since they prostituted themselves out they came tumbling down in 586BC to the king of Babylon. He says in verse 12, “So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness.” If you’re thinking you say, “Hey, wait a minute, it wasn’t the king of Assyria that defeated Mount Zion and Jerusalem, it was the king of Babylon. Yes, but you’d miss an important point. When a king in the ancient world conquered another king’s empire, he assumed all the titles of the other king. So the king of Babylon was also the king of Assyria. That’s why sometimes the OT refers to the future anti-Christ as Assyrian, not because he is Assyrian or arises out of Syria but because the anti-Christ will conquer the ancient Assyrian territory and thereby assume the title. And that’s what he’s talking about in verse 12, “So it will be that

when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem," some of which work still remains today, this is not complete yet, but when it is complete, then "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness." That's the punishment of the anti-Christ. So when you come down to verse 20 and read, "Now in that day..." it's talking about the day when the Lord punishes the anti-Christ, the last Gentile king. So now that we know the context let's continue to read. "...in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them, but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel." Alright, so Israel won't rely on the anti-Christ or any other Gentile kings as they have done over and over and over in their history and continue to do today. But in that day the remnant will rely on the Lord alone. And then verse 21 is where Paul begins to quote in Rom 9:27 saying, "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, Only a remnant within them will return." But in Rom 9:27 Paul says, "Only a remnant will be saved." You see, what Paul means by "saved" here is not go to heaven but to be rescued from the anti-Christ and his armies whom God will judge. As he says in the next verse both in Isa 10:23 and Rom 9:28. **28 FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY.**" In other words, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back at the Second Coming He' coming with rapid, decisive judgment. But the remnant is going to be saved physically, rescued, and delivered from these judgments so that they are taken into the kingdom. In 9:29, **And just as Isaiah foretold**, this coming from Isa 1:9, **"UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH."** Paul's picking up the fact that unless God, who is the Lord of Sabaoth, **Sabaoth** meaning "armies" and should be translated as such, this is a military context. And unless He had left a remnant, the entire nation of Israel would have been destroyed like Sodom and Gomorrah. And so, Paul's point is reaching all the way back to Rom 9:22 and He's saying if the whole nation had rejected then God could have totally obliterated the nation Israel, and that would mean that God's covenanted work to Israel would have been destroyed. But that can't be because God is faithful to His covenant and so there has come to be a remnant at this time and there will continue to be a remnant into that future time. There is always a remnant of believing Israel because if there is not a remnant then that nation would be totally destroyed from the face of the earth! Remember Sodom and Gomorrah? Destroyed from the face of the earth. Why? Because there was not one believer there. What did Abraham ask God? "Are you just going to sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous? Are you going to sweep it away and not spare for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you says Abraham, that you would slay the righteous with the wicked. Far be it from you to treat the righteous and wicked alike. Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly? So the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account. Then Abraham comes back and he ventures to ask about "forty-five" and the Lord said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." And then "forty" dwindles down to "thirty," and "twenty" to "ten" and the Lord says, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." The point is that as long as there is a righteous remnant God is not going to destroy it. And then you remember how the story goes. There turned out to be four righteous in the city; Lot, his wife and their two daughters. The angel comes and ends up having to

yank them by the hand to get them outside of the city. Why is the angel doing that? So God can destroy the city. God waited to destroy until what? Until the remnant were saved, taken away from the place of judgment. And so it will be in the last days of Israel, that there will be a remnant and they will be saved, physically rescued from the horrifying judgments that are coming. That is what this is talking about in Romans 9:27, 28 and 29. God is not going to destroy the whole nation Israel because there is at the present time a remnant, there is always a remnant and that is why Israel remains. When the day of His rapid and decisive judgment comes there will be a remnant and when on the brink of destruction they will call upon Him to be saved and He will come and save them, bring them into the kingdom, return them to their promised land, all of that is the subject of 9:29.

Now I don't know about you, but I hope you are as fascinated as I am with Paul's ability to string passages together. He goes from Hosea 2:23 to 1:10, over to Isa 10:22-23, then 1:9 and brings it back to Gen 18-19. Who of us could ever even quote one of these passages? And this guy just reels them off. It puts us all to shame I'm afraid. I can't do that. I can dig it out and mine what's there but it's remarkable his recollection of Scripture.